

HOMILY for THIRD SUNDAY in ORDINARY TIME – Year C

Peggy injured her leg while skiing one weekend. By the time she got home Saturday, the leg was swollen & she was having difficulty walking, so she had her physician paged. He called Peggy back & told her to soak the leg in hot water.

She tried the hot water, but the leg only became more swollen & painful. Peggy's maid saw her limping & said, "I don't know – I am only a maid – but I always thought it was better to use cold water, not hot, for swelling." Peggy tried switching to cold water & the swelling rapidly subsided.

On Sunday afternoon, she again had the doctor paged so she could complain, "Say, what kind of doctor are you? You told me to soak my leg in hot water & it got worse. It was my maid, for crying out loud, who told me to use cold water. It was fine after that!"

"Really?" answered the doctor. "I don't understand it; my maid said to use hot water."

We'll talk about feet & other parts of the body in just a moment. For now, I'd like to focus on today's Gospel & what Jesus just said. He went away for a while to recruit His twelve apostles & other followers as He began His public ministry. Like some of you who went away for college & other training, today's Gospel tell us that Jesus completed His first tour & came back to Galilee & Nazareth to visit His hometown. He followed His Jewish tradition & stopped by a local synagogue to read the Torah/Bible & spend time in prayer. He opened the holy book & read the passage we just heard. Then, He ended with this saying, "Today, this Scripture passage is fulfilled in your hearing." What is Jesus talking about? What is being fulfilled in His presence?

For the Jews, what they were hoping for was a political Messiah, who would lead them to defeat the Romans & restore Israel to the golden days of King David. That was their hope; but Jesus would not fulfill that dream for them as history told us. For the righteous & the faithful of God, they were expecting & demanding a judgmental Messiah, who would gladly condemn our sinful world & wipe it out to start a brand-new one. They were looking forward to see this divine figure to bring about a catastrophic event like the epic flood in Noah time. But, history lets us see that Jesus did not come to condemn & destroy our sinful world. Instead, He willingly offered His life on the Cross to repay for our sins & give us a chance to enter Heaven. So, Jesus' mission was to save souls & bring home the lost & the broken. His three years of ministry & ultimate sacrifice on the Cross confirms that mission of salvation for us. Jesus indeed came to save & not to destroy anything or condemn anyone. He even reached out to His enemies & offered this final prayer, "Father, forgive them for they know not what they've done."

Having explained all of that, let's now go back to the Scripture passage that Jesus read from the Torah/Bible & see what He was talking about. Here is what Jesus read, "The Spirit of the Lord is upon me; therefore He has anointed me. He has sent me to bring glad tidings to the poor; to proclaim liberty to captives, recovery of sight to the blind, & release to prisoners; & to announce a year of favor from the Lord." So, Jesus confirms today's Gospel & tells His audience that those things would be fulfilled by Him. In other words, He would bring glad tidings to the poor, proclaim liberty to captives, heal the blind, set prisoners free, & establish a year of favor from the Lord. As you can see, Jesus came to uplift & help out our broken world. He entered it to bring hope to the hopeless & a new life to the downtrodden. He did not come to condemn us

& keep us away from Heaven. Rather, He offered Himself to be the harbinger of Good News & healer to our broken world. He wished to make our days a little better & spread the favor from the Lord to us a whole year long. The reason I underlined what Jesus came for & actually did is to remind us to stop condemning & judging people who don't share our spiritual viewpoints & worship customs. We must rid our hearts of hatred & judging attitude. We must stop turning someone different from us into our enemy, or worst yet an agent of darkness. Instead, we should learn from our Lord & try to be the harbinger of Good News. We should fill our hearts with love & understanding. We must learn to do one good deed every day & bring hope & new life to others.

I believe that one of the reasons why we're not like Jesus yet is because we do not appreciate & understand what it means to belong to the body of Christ. We continue to fight with one another & despise other members of that body for various reasons. This Sunday's Second Reading explains well about the body of Christ & that fight as following, "The body is one & has many members, but all the members, many though they are, are one body; so it is with Christ. It was in one spirit that all of us, whether Jew or Greek, slave or free, were baptized into one body... You then are the body of Christ. Every one of you is a member of it." It continues, "...God has set each member of the body in the place He wanted it to be. If all the members were alike, where would the body be? There are indeed many different members but one body. The eye cannot say to the hand, 'I do not need you,' anymore than the head can say to the feet, 'I do not need you.' Even those members of the body which seem less important are in fact indispensable. We honor the members we consider less honorable by clothing them with greater care." So, we're advised to treat all Christians as sacred members of the body of Christ. We should not tell another Christian that he/she is bad & we do not need him/her because we differ with him/her over an issue. Instead, we should treat him/her with care to win him/her back. We should not vilify him/her & condemn his/her actions. For judgment is reserved to God alone. We should listen to Paul's advice & honor that person as a sacred member of the body of Christ. We should not act as a judge, or as if we were more spiritually superior than him/her.

My dear brothers & sisters, we could choose to unite all Christians – righteous & sinful alike – to build up the broken body of Christ & help it shine brightly. Or, we could join the self-righteous to condemn other Christians & tear apart the suffering body of Christ. I do not know about you, but I choose to follow the example of Jesus in today's Gospel & continue to bring hope to our world & lift up others for the rest of my life. I'll try to do one good deed each day & make a difference to the world around me instead of fighting with it & condemning it.